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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 62nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DINU (Romania)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/212

* Items considered together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/212 (A/47/7/Add.15; A/C.5/47/88)

1. Mr. VARELA (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela), fully supported the comments of the Group of 77 and stressed that restructuring should be carried out in the spirit of the guidelines laid down in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and the relevant General Assembly resolutions (in particular, resolutions 45/264, 46/232 and 46/235). Being convinced that the maintenance of peace and security was closely linked to economic and social development, the countries of the Rio Group could only welcome the proposals aimed at revitalizing the Secretariat. However, they agreed with earlier speakers that it was regrettable that the Secretary-General's report contained neither an overall plan for restructuring nor specific information on the mechanisms which would ensure coordination between the three new departments established in the economic and social sector.

2. As the Advisory Committee had rightly indicated in paragraphs 19 to 21 of its report, more justification was needed in relation to the transfer of functions and posts. The Rio Group was gratified that the Secretary-General intended to strengthen the role of the regional commissions, but stressed that true decentralization meant decentralization to the level of individual countries. Noting that the transfer to Geneva of activities concerning transnational corporations and science and technology for development was designed to strengthen the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), he drew attention to the importance of UNCTAD for the well-balanced development of world trade.

3. The comments of the Advisory Committee regarding vacancy management, in particular concerning reporting to the intergovernmental bodies concerned, were most apt. With regard to the restructuring of the Department of Administration and Management, the Advisory Committee had rightly requested the Secretary-General to deal on an urgent basis with the outstanding issues regarding peace-keeping operations. Furthermore, as the Group of 77 had remarked, it was a matter of concern that the post of the Head of the International Trade Centre (ITC) had not yet been filled and that the Secretariat was considering downgrading that post to the D-2 level, since the Centre played a major role in the promotion of more equitable trade. He was also concerned that there were plans to downgrade certain management posts in the Department of Administration and Management at a time when the Department was being given expanded responsibilities. As recommended by the Advisory Committee, objective criteria should be laid down for the classification of high-level posts. With respect to the creation of D-3 posts, the Advisory Committee had rightly noted that such an

(Mr. Varela)

approach would not necessarily improve career prospects, that it could give rise to confusion and that it should in any case first be considered by the International Civil Service Commission.

4. The countries of the Group of 77 stressed that the practical application of the Secretary-General's proposals should not impair the implementation of the programmes approved by the General Assembly. While they recognized the prerogatives of the Secretary-General with regard to organization, they pointed out that the Secretariat was at the service of the Member States. If the Member States had certain reservations and questions, it was because they had not always been sufficiently consulted. It was therefore essential that subsequent proposals should be clearly presented to them and should take their concerns into account.

5. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that he fully shared the views of the Group of 77 and the Rio Group. He was gratified that, contrary to what had occurred during the first phase of restructuring, a dialogue had been initiated between the Secretariat and the Member States. The second phase was an attempt to redress the imbalance created to the detriment of the economic and social sector during the first phase, which had resulted in the strengthening of the political sector along the lines hoped for by the developed countries. He reminded those who complained that there had been no opportunity for the Secretary-General's proposals to be considered by the relevant intergovernmental bodies that that had also occurred during the first phase.

6. He regretted that the Secretariat had neither drawn up an overall plan for restructuring nor set clear time-frames. Since reform should not be an end in itself, during the third phase, the results would have to be consolidated and the structure of the Secretariat established. That should be done in such a way as to comply with General Assembly resolution 47/212 and the numerous other resolutions in which the General Assembly had reaffirmed that the Secretary-General should not prejudge decisions by Member States regarding the revitalization of the economic and social sectors.

7. Contrary to the claim of the Secretary-General in paragraph 63 of his report, there was no consensus about the need for a unified United Nations presence and approach at the country level. The Group of 77 had duly drawn attention to that fact. He hoped that the Secretariat would take into account the observations of the Advisory Committee in that respect.

8. He stressed that there were no guidelines from any deliberative body which made it possible to claim that developing countries and countries in transition had the same level of priority, or that the United Nations could deal with issues relating to the sovereignty of Member States. Any proposals along such lines should be eliminated.

9. The transfer from New York to Geneva of activities relating to transnational corporations and science and technology for development was not in itself important, if there was a well-defined structure responsible for the full implementation of programmes approved by Member States. His delegation was prepared to participate in the search for an agreement to that effect.

(Mr. Fontaine-Ortiz, Cuba)

10. He supported the comments of the Advisory Committee regarding vacancy management. Excessive use was being made of temporary transfers and it was important to return to the applicable regulations in that respect. With regard to high-level posts, his delegation endorsed the remarks of the Group of 77 and the Rio Group. It supported all the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee and hoped that the revised estimates would be adopted, on the understanding that the Secretary-General should be given clear guidelines for the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.

11. Mr. OSELLA (Argentina) said that he fully supported the statement made by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group. As the Finnish delegation had done on behalf of the Nordic countries, he wished to voice his concern regarding the financing of the activities of the very important Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on climate change. The contracts of several staff members who provided secretariat services for the Committee were due to expire on 31 March 1993 and he wondered whether they would be renewed.

12. Mr. DUVAL (Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance), replying to the representative of Argentina, confirmed that the resources allocated to the Intergovernmental Committee at the time of the adoption of resolution 47/195 had been maintained in the revised estimates. The Secretariat had, inter alia, provided for the transfer of four vacant posts to that heading. The staffing levels approved for the first quarter of 1993 would thus be maintained in full until 31 December. The one-week gap which would occur between the expiry of certain contracts and the adoption of the revised estimates would have no effect.

13. Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) supported the remarks made by the Colombian delegation on behalf of the Group of 77. He simply wished to add that the transfer of the World Food Council from Rome to New York would not of itself guarantee greater efficiency. The Secretary-General's proposal in that respect might hamper the intergovernmental consultations under way. Any modification should be completely in accordance with resolutions 45/264 and 47/150.

14. Mr. DADZIE (Special Adviser and Delegate of the Secretary-General on the Reform of the Economic and Social Sector) said that the dialogue between the Secretariat and the Member States was very encouraging. He stressed that nothing in the Secretary-General's proposals could be interpreted as an attempt to modify programmes and priorities established by Governments. The task of the Secretariat was simply to implement them.

15. With regard to the transfer of the Office for Projects Services, he said that that proposal would not be implemented before the beginning of 1994, by which time the Governing Council of UNDP would have considered its budget proposals and the General Assembly would have examined the proposed programme budget of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.